

Eden District Council

Accounts and Governance Committee Minutes

Date: 7 July 2021 Venue: The Sports Hall, Penrith Leisure Centre, Penrith CA11 8JH Time: 6.45 pm

Present:

Chairman: Councillor M Eyles

Vice Chairman: Councillor S Lancaster

Councillors: R Briggs
A Connell
K Greenwood
J C Lynch

N McCall
G Nicolson OBE
D Wicks

Officers Present: Paul Sutton, Interim Director of Resources
Lisa Tremble, Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services

Democratic Services Officer: Paul Rogers

AGc/1/07/21 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Proposed by Councillor Wicks
Seconded by Councillor Nicolson

and **RESOLVED** that Councillor Lancaster be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Accounts and Governance Committee for 2021/2022.

AGc/2/07/21 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies of absence received.

AGc/3/07/21 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that minutes AGc/37/04/21 to AGc/45/04/21 of the meeting of the Accounts and Governance Committee held on 15 April 2021 be confirmed and approved by the Chairman as a correct record of those proceedings.

AGc/4/07/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

AGc/5/07/21 Alston Moor Parish Council

Members considered report G23/21 of the Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services on the findings of an independent assessment of various complaints and associated correspondence concerning members of Alston Moor Parish Council.

Mrs Kathy Reeds, a member of the public, was allowed to make a statement. She stated that the report should be rejected on the grounds that a thorough investigation of each complaint, or of the individuals that the complaints had been made against, had not been carried out. She made reference to the recommendations in the report which in her view if approved, would not remove the fractious Members of the parish Council.

Councillor Nicolson asked whether the investigation officer had communicated with those persons making the complaints. He stated that if contact had not been made with the complainants then a rational decision on the matter could not be made.

The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services informed Members that the investigating officer had not been in communication with the complainants.

It was proposed by Councillor Nicolson that the current report be set aside and to authorise the Monitoring Officer to commission a further investigation to review the complaints made of Alston Moor Parish Council and that the investigation to include communication with the complainants.

Seconded by Councillor Wicks.

and **RESOLVED** that

1. the Recommendations in the report be set aside; and
2. the Monitoring Officer be authorised to commission an investigation to review the complaints made of Alston Moor Parish Council and that the investigation to include communication with the complainants and about who those complaints were made.

AGc/6/07/21 External Audit Update

Members considered report F22/21 from the Interim Director of Resources which provided an update from the External Auditor on the Statement of Accounts Audit for both 19/20 and 20/21.

Gareth Kelly, Engagement Lead, on behalf of Grant Thornton, presented the update, attached at Appendix 1 to report F22/21. He referred to the difficulties experienced due to events of the past 18 months but informed Members that they had recommenced the completion of the audit and he would report audit findings in late July/August 2021. He expected that they would issue their audit plan summarising their approach to key risks on the audit in September 2021.

Proposed by Councillor Eyles

Seconded by Councillor Lancaster

and **RESOLVED** that the Audit Progress Report and Sector Update from Grant Thornton be noted.

AGc/7/07/21 Audit Scope and Additional Work 2020/21

Members considered report F23/21 which proved an update from the External Auditor on the Statement of Accounts Audit for both 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Gareth Kelly, Engagement Lead, on behalf of Grant Thornton, presented the update on the scope of the audit and additional work required for the 2021 closedown audit which was attached at Appendix 1 to report F23/21.

Paul Sutton, Interim Director of Resources, emphasised to Members that the additional work required which would result in an increase in budget was, in his opinion as Section 151 officer, critical to provide the level of resources much more in line with that required to undertake the task.

Gareth Kelly referred to previous comments he had made to the Council in February 2020 where he had emphasised the burden the increased regulatory focus now facing all audit suppliers and the impact this would have on the scope of their work for 2019/20 and beyond and referred to this as 'raising the bar' which reflected the expectation from the FRC that all audit work should now be of level 2a (limited improvement only) or better. He informed Members that the uplifted audit levels were in line with other Councils.

Proposed by Councillor Eyles
Seconded by Councillor Connell

and **RESOLVED** that the update on the Scope and Additional work for the Audit 2020/21 from Grant Thornton be noted.

AGc/8/07/21 Internal Audit Annual Report 2020/21

Members considered report F25/21 from the Interim Director of Resources which set out the Internal Audit Annual report for 2020/21.

Peter Harrison, representing TIAA, presented the report, attached at Appendix 1 to report F25/21. The report summaries the outcomes of the reviews TIAA had carried out on the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control. The report which incorporated CIPFA guidance on the potential limitation of scope brought about by the impact of COVID 19, was designed to assist the Council in making its Annual Governance Statement. TIAA's report referred to the question of limitations on their opinion arising from COVID 19 pandemic. These possible limitations were set out in the report. TIAA's opinion was, however, that there had been minimal or no impact on the delivery of the internal audit work for 2020/21 as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic with no changes to planned work. Any changes to the plan were on business/operational need.

Proposed by Councillor Eyles
Seconded by Councillor Greenwood

And **RESOLVED** that the Internal Audit Annual Report 2020/21 from TIAA be noted.

AGc/9/07/21 Internal Audit - Summary Internal Controls Assurance Report 2021/22

Members considered report F26/21 from the Interim Director of Resources which presented the Summary Internal Controls Assurance Report 2021/22.

Peter Harrison, representing TIAA, presented the report, attached at Appendix 1. Their report proved a summary with an update on the emerging Governance, Risk and Internal Control related issues and the progress of their work at the Council as at 29 June 2021.

Peter Harrison referred to the easing of restrictions and decisions by many businesses as to how they are going to operate in a post-lockdown world and the report stressed that whether clients preferred virtual/remote or face to face provision of assurance services they would continue to consider the impact of Governance, Risk and Internal Control of any changes in work practices.

Proposed by Councillor Eyles
Seconded by Councillor Wicks

And **RESOLVED** that the Summary Internal Controls Assurance Report from TIAA be noted.

AGc/10/07/21 Work Programme

Members considered report F24/21 from the Interim Director of Resources which set out the work programme for the Accounts and Governance Committee as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Proposed by Councillor Eyles
Seconded by Councillor Lynch

and **RESOLVED** that the Work Programme as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

AGc/11/07/21 Any Other Items Which the Chairman Decides are Urgent

There were no urgent items of business.

AGc/12/07/21 Date of Next Scheduled Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Committee was confirmed as 9 September 2021.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm

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